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TWO SERMONS

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL IN LEWIN's MEAD, BRISTOL,

ON THE

MORNING AND EVENING OF SUNDAY, OCT. 16, 1825:

I.

ON THE FUTURE STATE OF THE RIGHTEOUS,

OCCASIONED BY THE LAMENTED DEATH OF

MRS. MARY ROWE,

THE WIFE OF THE REV. JOHN ROWE,

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF LEWIN'S MEAD CHAPEL.

II.

ON NUMBERING OUR DAYS,

SUGGESTED BY A RECENT UNUSUAL MORTALITY IN THE CONGREGATION.

BY ROBERT ASPLAND,

MINISTER OF THE NEW GRAVEL-PIT CHAPEL, HACKNEY.

LONDON:

SOLD BY R. HUNTER ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD;

AND

W. BROWNE, BRISTOL.

1825.

1855 Feb 19, Ordered
Rev Caleb Davis Bradlee,
of North Carolina

PRINTED BY G. SMALLFIELD, HACKNEY.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The two following Sermons, on the most common of all pulpit topics, are committed to the press solely in consequence of the flattering and urgent request of the very respectable Christian Congregation before whom they were preached, and of their revered Pastors. Attaching but little importance to the publication of Discourses on fugitive occasions, the Author is notwithstanding induced to hope that the same sympathy and candour which caused these to be heard with some interest, may also lead to their being read to edification, within that circle at least in which they were delivered.

To put upon record, as far as this humble publication may be effectual to the end, the unaffected condolence of the Lewin's Mead Congregation with their highly-respected and esteemed Senior Minister, the Rev. John Rowe, in his recent heavy affliction, and not to gratify any personal feelings, the Author takes the liberty of subjoining the following report of the proceedings of the Congregation, placed in his hands officially.

October 22, 1825.

To EDWIN SHUTE, Esq.,

Treasurer of Lewin's Mead Meeting.

We the undersigned request you will summon a meeting of the Congregation to-morrow, to be held in the Chapel after the Morning Service, to consider the propriety of requesting the publication of the Discourses delivered in the morning and evening of Sunday last by the Rev. Robert Aspland.

(Signed)

Richard Bright,	John Shute,
Lant Carpenter,	John Bishop Estlin,
Arthur Palmer,	Alfred George,
Samuel Charles Fripp,	M. H. Castle,
Robert Bruce,	Samuel Lang,
Robert Bruce, Jun.	Thomas Fry,
Henry R. Llewelin,	John Hewson,
Edward Harley,	W. Y. Sheppard,
Ad. Moens,	George Webb Hall.

To the Officiating Minister.

You are requested to give notice, that, in pursuance of a Requisition addressed to the Treasurer, a meeting of the Congregation will be held in this place immediately after the present Service, to consider the propriety of requesting the publication of the two Discourses delivered on Sunday last by the Rev. Robert Aspland.

On behalf of the Treasurer,

Alfred George.

Lewin's Mead, October 23, 1825.

LEWIN'S MEAD CHAPEL,

Sunday, October 23, 1825.

At a Special General Meeting of the Congregation held this day, in pursuance of a Requisition addressed to the Treasurer, to consider the propriety of requesting the publication of the two Discourses delivered here last Lord's-day by the Rev. Robert Aspland, on occasion of the lamented Death of Mrs. Rowe;

RICHARD BRIGHT, Esq., in the Chair;

The Requisition having been read, a copy of which is affixed, as also the public notice from the pulpit:

On the motion of Arthur Palmer, Esq., seconded by Robert Bruce, Esq.,

Resolved unanimously,

That the best thanks of this Meeting be presented to the Rev. Robert Aspland, for the eloquent, masterly and impressive Discourses which he delivered in this place last Lord's-day, on occasion of the afflictive bereavement of our greatly respected Friend and Pastor, the Rev. John Rowe; and that Mr. Aspland be earnestly solicited to cause them to be printed, at the expense of this Congregation, as soon as his convenience will permit.

Resolved unanimously,

That the Chairman be requested to transmit the foregoing Resolution to Mr. Rowe, and to express the hope that he will unite in and promote the object of it; at the same time offering him the assurances of our respectful and affectionate sympathy with him under the loss of one

so universally esteemed for the Christian excellencies of her character and the blameless usefulness of her life, with our cordial desires that he and his family may experience the full influence of those supports and consolations which he has so often and effectually administered to others, and that he may long be enabled to continue his important and highly valued services, with comfort to himself and edification to his flock.

RICHARD BRIGHT,
CHAIRMAN.

Resolved unanimously,

That the cordial and respectful thanks of this Meeting be given to the Chairman.

Lately published by the same Author,

1.

Price 1*s.*

THE CAUSES OF THE SLOW PROGRESS OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH:

A SERMON,

Delivered at the Conigre Meeting-house, Trowbridge, Wilts, on Wednesday, July 13, before the WESTERN UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

2.

2d Edition, Price 1*s.* 6*d.*

THE BLESSING PRONOUNCED BY CHRIST ON THE MERCIFUL:

A SERMON,

Preached at the New Gravel-Pit Meeting-house, Hackney, on Sunday, January 12th, 1823, on occasion of the much-lamented Death of SAMUEL PETT, Esq., M. D., of Clapton, who departed this Life on the 1st of January, in the 58th Year of his Age.

Sold by R. Hunter, 72, St. Paul's Churchyard, London; and W. Browne, Bristol.

3.

2d Edition, Price 2*s.*

THE REUNION OF THE WISE AND GOOD IN A FUTURE STATE:

A SERMON,

Preached in the Old Jewry Chapel, in Jewin Street, Aldersgate Street, on Sunday, June 19, 1825, on occasion of the lamented Death of the Rev. ABRAHAM REES, D.D., F.R.S., F.L.S., &c., who departed this Life on the 9th of June, in the Eighty-second Year of his Age. To which is added, THE ADDRESS delivered at the Chapel over the Body, on Saturday, June 18, 1825, previously to its interment in Bunhill-fields. By THOMAS REES, LL.D., F.S.A.

Printed by request of the Congregation and of the Family of the Deceased.

Sold by Longman and Co., Paternoster Row.

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TWO SERMONS.

SERMON I.

FUTURE STATE OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

1 John iii. 2:

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Discontent with the present life is not a Christian habit of mind; but no person accustomed to serious thoughts, and possessing any strength of feeling, can take full and entire satisfaction in a state of being where he is conscious from experience that he treads upon a rolling wave, and that his confidence rests upon the sand. Every one feels many inconveniences, disappointments and vexations; some are sufferers under pains of body, and others under distress of mind; many are sad and sorrowful under bereavements; while to none is there assured possession of any earthly good, but the reverse; for good and evil are relative to life, and that is precarious, or rather is constantly flowing away with a steady, certain and irresistible current; and with regard to thousands of human beings now in exist-

ence, probably with regard to some of us, the stream has not far to run before it falls into the ocean of Eternity.

Of all the evils of the human condition, long and astounding as is the catalogue, there are none which are not at this moment afflicting some of our fellow-creatures: a reflection which one of our most able and useful practical writers, the author of *Holy Dying*,* thus follows into particulars, for the sake of the concluding exhortation to piety: "But if we could from one of the battlements of heaven espie how many men and women at this time lie fainting and dying for want of bread; how many young men are hewn down by the sword of war; how many poor orphans are now weeping over the graves of their father, by whose life they were enabled to eat: if we could but hear how many mariners and passengers are at this present in a storm, and shriek out because their keel dashes against a rock or bulges under them; how many people there are that weep with want, and are mad with oppression, or are desperate by too quick a sense of constant infelicity:—in all reason, we should be glad to be out of the noise and participation of so many evils. This is a place of sorrows and tears, of great evils and a constant calamity: let us remove from hence, at least in affections and preparation of mind."

This being the condition of man, how unspeakably important is our religion, which teaches and assures

* Ch. i. § 5. Conclus.

us that all that belongs to us is not involved in the present transitory and unsatisfying state! I shall now attempt to enforce this truth by shewing in the light held out to us by the holy apostle in the text, *On what grounds depends the Christian expectation of a future happier state of existence*, and *In what the happiness and glory of that state will consist.*

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

I. It is proposed to shew *on what grounds depends the Christian expectation of a future happier state of existence.* These the apostle sums up in a few words, *Now are we the sons of God,* words which involve the whole of the argument for a happy immortality.

Our judgment of the condition and destiny of man is indeed of necessity determined by the view that we take of God. The few persons that succeed in the strange attempt to erase the notion of a Supreme Intelligence from their minds, reduce themselves to the melancholy state in which the chief of the apostles describes a part of the Heathen world to have been before the promulgation of the gospel,—*without God, without hope.* The larger number that are destitute, whether from inconsideration and levity, from worldly-mindedness or from a habit of scepticism, of clear and definite perceptions of the

Divine character and of settled confidence in the Divine Providence, are unavoidably abandoned to uncertainty in all that excites the strongest hopes and fears of mankind, and whatever conjectures they may occasionally indulge in respect of futurity, cannot have any expectations of sufficient solidity to impel their conduct or to sustain their minds under the pressure of adversity. Nothing short of the habitual persuasion of the fatherly character of the Almighty will in reality keep alive or justify a good hope for the time to come; and, for obvious reasons, none in Christian countries can be expected to entertain this persuasion who are *strangers to the covenants of promise.*

The object of divine revelation may be variously stated with equal truth; but no definition of it can be more exact and more comprehensive than that it is designed to establish in the human breast the conviction that God is a Father. This includes every thing, whether of promise or of duty. If he be a Father, it follows from his known perfections, that his creatures are governed in wisdom and with goodness; that every part of the plan of Providence is arranged with a view to their good upon the whole; and that the natural desires and strongest expectations of intelligent creatures will not be finally disappointed: and no more than the knowledge of him as a Father is required to explain our obligations to love him, to revere his authority, to obey his commands, to submit to his will with patience and resig-

nation, and to place our trust in his goodness and mercy.

And that he is a Father, we may perceive as soon as our eyes are opened by the light of divine revelation, in every part of man's bodily frame, in the constitution of his mind, in the harmony of all his powers, bodily and mental, in the earth which is allotted for his habitation and adapted to all his wants and faculties, in the co-operation of the whole system of things to serve him, and in the train of events by which his mind is influenced and his character formed.

It is true that there are evils, as we began with stating, and sore evils, in the condition of the human being; but of these, some are evidently productive of good, even in a natural sense; others have a discernible moral use; and all admit of explanation on the Christian principle of a future and eternal state of retribution, compensation and enjoyment. As yet, we have the imperfections no less than the promises of *children;* and it was not to have been expected that in our earthly state of weakness and error we should be able to see all the designs and to comprehend all the plans of our Heavenly Father. It is enough for us to know already that his government is parental; and for the rest, as far as relates to his character and our own happy destiny under his benevolent sway, *what we know not now, we shall know hereafter.*

No one that has not studied the New Testament

with a particular view to the doctrine, can be fully aware of the perpetual use made by our Lord and the apostles of the great truth that God is the Father of mankind. By a sort of secret argument they infer from it that He will be a Father to them always; in other words, that if they be, morally speaking, his children, (a distinction never to be overlooked!) they will live for ever to taste his goodness. Hear the soul-reviving words of the great High Priest and Apostle of our profession: THE FATHER'S COMMANDMENT IS LIFE EVERLASTING. He is a Father, because he commands life: he commands *life* in order to diffuse his own happiness: the world, created by his hand, is a depository of the means of life; innumerable creatures of every form and rank, and of countless variety of duration, testify his bountiful will; and the never-failing generations of men rise up in succession to admire and adore the gracious design of Him in whom they live and move and have their being. And because he is a Father, he commands *life everlasting* to the children of men; it being necessary for the vindication of his paternal character that the hopes of immortality, which he has made a natural result of the reason of mankind, should be fulfilled, and that the unequal distribution of good and evil in the present state, should be rectified and compensated in a more happy and perfect world. *The Father's* COMMANDMENT *is life everlasting;* and what the Supreme Father commands, who shall resist, or which of his

children will despair or doubt of seeing accomplished? His will is a law to the universe, and from him, the Fountain of goodness, can emanate only *the law of life.*

The beloved disciple in these epistles characterizes Christians as *born of God;* plainly implying, that as by their natural birth they received an earthly and perishable nature, so by their spiritual birth they become partakers of the Divine nature, spiritual and immortal. In his gospel he represents the Word of Life, the Saviour of the world, as giving power, or authority, to them that believe on him *to become the sons of God;* and how much is implied in that character let the well-beloved Son of God explain. Asserting the doctrine of the resurrection against the Sadducees, he maintains, that it is shewn in the title which Moses ascribes to Jehovah, of *God of Abraham; for he is not the God of the dead, but of the living—and all live unto him.* The relation of God and creatures is that of Father and children. And contrasting the future world with the present, the same Divine Teacher declares, *They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead, die no more, for they are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.* To be born again, born of God, is to be born for immortality.

In this peculiar view of Christianity, how exultingly does the Apostle Paul write in his Epistle to the Romans!* *If the Spirit of him that raised*

* Ch. viii. vers. 11, 15—21, 23.

up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his spirit that dwelleth in you. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, (i. e. to fear death,) *but ye have received the spirit of adoption* (the filial spirit) *whereby we cry Abba, Father. The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity,* (i. e. mortality,) *not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

This sublime doctrine receives a beautiful illustration from the office and title of Christ. He was pre-eminently *the Son of God,* because he was *the first-born from the dead.* He was *declared to be the Son of God* (says the apostle) *by the resurrection.* His immortality was the sign of his adoption, the seal of his sonship. He is even styled *the only-begotten Son of God,* inasmuch as he is *the only-begotten from the dead.* His reward and his glory

is to be *the first-born among many brethren, the first-fruits of them that slept.*

The ground then of the Christian's hope and expectation for futurity is, that God is a Father and he is a child of God. *Behold* (says our apostle) *what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

II. It is proposed to shew *in what the happiness and glory of a future state will consist.* But at the same time it is not overlooked, that while the apostle excites our admiration and our hope, he drops a reflection calculated to check our presumption and to humble us under a sense of our ignorance and incapacity. *It doth not yet appear what we shall be.* How the dead will be raised and with what body they will come forth, where the scene of future happiness will be placed, what will be the occupations of glorified spirits, what the organs of knowledge and enjoyment, and by what means they will communicate with one another, and with other intelligent beings,—are questions on which the mind may innocently and piously try its powers, but on which it is easier and safer to think than to speak. The future world will be a new state, to which none of our analogies from sensible things may correctly

apply. It is probable that language could not convey to our minds an exact representation of it; and if it could, the silence of the New Testament may teach us that the knowledge would not, in our present imperfect state, be a blessing. But our uncertainty need not trouble us. The infant is incapable of conceiving of the condition in which he will exist as a man; still he has all the latent capacities of manhood, and in the course of nature will grow up into it by sure but insensible degrees: in like manner, man may be designed for immortality, and may be habitually ripening into that as yet unknown state, although he cannot anticipate his future self, or imagine *what he shall be.* Enough is it for him to know that his Heavenly Father has promised that he shall triumph over death, that his consciousness shall be renewed, and that, regenerated after the power of an endless life, he shall enjoy the purest pleasures and attain to the highest honours of which his nature is capable. He that made the wonderful fabric of man can make it anew; he has given sufficient assurance that he will; and the time and manner may well be left to his sovereign wisdom.

The descriptions of the world to come by the sacred writers are altogether general, and consist of the images of those things that are here most intimately associated with joy and glory. Heaven is a festival, in which good men will sit down with the most illustrious of their kind and enjoy communion

with their Saviour and through him with the Father of all. It is a kingdom in which they will reign for ever, on thrones that cannot be shaken and with crowns that shall not fade away. It is a state of light, of safety, purity, activity and joy, in which they shall shine as the sun. It is a condition of perfect life, unalloyed satisfaction and pleasure. It is a temple not made with hands and eternal, the gates of which are never shut, and in which all the righteous minister as priests before God, singing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb, and uniting in their hallelujahs with all the wise and good from every climate and every age and every dispensation of faith and knowledge. It is a holy city, whose foundations are the rock of ages, whose builder and maker is God. It is a paradise, a garden of peace and pleasure, where grows the tree of life, bearing ever-varied fruit, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, and where flows the river of the waters of life, fresh from the everlasting fountain. It is a day without night, created by that Sun which never goes down nor is obscured by clouds, even the glory of Him who dwelleth from eternity in his own inconceivable splendours.

These figures raise our imagination as high as it can be carried, and the sublimity of the prospect is not impaired by the few definite particulars with which we are supplied by divine revelation.

1. Our nature will be regenerated and made in-

corruptible and immortal. Flesh and blood will be done away, with all that belongs to that constitution and mode of existence. Our bodies will be spiritual; that is, they will have new properties wholly distinct from and infinitely superior to those of gross matter. Now conceive of the entire abolition of death, with all its pains and all its fears, and of the annihilation of all those cares and toils and uneasy passions which arise out of our present earthly state and fleshly nature, and you lose sight at once of nearly all that we account evil. You lose also in this view of your future being, it is granted, the distinct perception of some of the means of both virtue and enjoyment; but there can be no difficulty in believing that the glorified body will contain or procure helps and facilities to both far surpassing our experience,and even our calculations. Our Lord says, that *the children of the resurrection will be equal unto the angels;* and the Apostle Paul says, that Christ, by whom God will make all things new, will *change our vile bodies, and make them like unto his own glorious body;* from which we may conclude amongst other things, that in our heavenly nature and state we shall be able to rise from scene to scene, and to become familiar with a boundless province of the Creator's glorious works.

2. The abode of man will be accommodated to his improved personal condition. The present globe with its elements will undergo a change, the dissolution perhaps of its form and the alteration of some

of its primary laws; *nevertheless,* says the Apostle Peter, *we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

3. All that we can infer from the nature of the mind, and all that we can distinctly trace in the map of the spiritual Canaan laid down in Scripture, agree to assure us that Heaven will be a state of society. Were it not so, it is impossible to conceive how it should be suited to man, under any modification of his nature. The relations of human life depending upon the animal senses will of necessity be superseded: but these are not the only, nor the noblest of the social relations; and these may not be forgotten, but on the contrary refined and spiritualized, so that the connexions of parent and child, and husband and wife, may in reality still subsist in the form of a nearer and tenderer friendship. In his last prayer to the Father, our Lord supplicated that those whom the Father had given him upon earth, his disciples, companions and friends, might be with him hereafter to behold his glory. All our virtuous feelings prompt us to put up the same prayer, and the fatherly character of God is a pledge that the prayer will be heard. His "house" is composed of "many mansions," in which the families of the earth will be gathered together in delightful and eternal brotherhood. Our forerunner is gone to prepare places in these for all his disciples, and all the obedient children of God, according to their intellectual and moral capacity and rank. To

one another, therefore, they may address Paul's animated language to one of the churches, *For what is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.**

4. The future state will be a dispensation of knowledge and truth. *It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is.* The sense of sight is the noblest and most intellectual of all the senses; it is the fittest image of the mind. To *see God* is to know him, to understand his character, to behold his perfections, to trace his ways and to study his works. Here we do not see God as he is; frequently we see him as he is not, misjudging his ways and misinterpreting his designs. Clouds and darkness are round about him: his paths are in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known. Deep mysteries are in the scheme of his Providence. Adversity and affliction appear

* The author begs leave to refer the reader to a Sermon on this topic, lately published by him on occasion of the death of his venerable friend, the Rev. Dr. Abraham Rees, entitled *The Reunion of the Wise and Good in a Future State.* And he cannot make this reference without reflecting that the last time that he had the honour of appearing in Lewin's Mead pulpit (in the summer of 1823) before he was called to preach the present Sermon, was the evening of the day on which his ever-honoured friend, who is now gone to his reward, delivered one of his judicious and instructive discourses in the morning. To the Sermon alluded to is added an Address at the Interment of Dr. Rees, by Dr. Thomas Rees, containing a just and masterly delineation of his mind and character.

strange to us, and death mocks all our reasonings. If we perceive light through these clouds, it is only in feeble glimmerings. *Now, we see through a glass, darkly; then, face to face: now, we know in part; then, shall we know even as also we are known.* In God are all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom: to behold him, therefore, will be the same as to discover the principles on which his works have been framed, and the laws by which he governs the universe. As his works are boundless, so will our inquiries be. Creation, Providence and Redemption, that glorious economy into which the angels desire to look, will be an inexhaustible study and a ceaseless delight. Compared with the acquisitions of our minds, when they shall be clothed with spiritual forms, our highest attainments here will appear as the elementary lessons of childhood. *Beholding with open, unveiled face, the glory of the Lord, we shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory.*

5. As a consequence of all this, the heavenly world will be a state of moral purity and spiritual perfection. The removal of natural imperfections, and the improvement, the extension and purification of the intellectual powers, will extinguish temptation, and bring into action new and increasing motives to all moral excellence. The experience of earth will be wisdom in heaven. The society of that happy state will be a help to holiness as well as the means of happiness; the presence of Him especially who

is the Image of the Invisible God, will furnish a constant example and incitement to goodness; and more immediate communion than can now be understood with the Father of spirits, will open an ever-flowing source of pure thoughts and virtuous sentiments. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him. Hence, while every thing imperfect in the forms even of our virtue and piety shall be done away, the Apostle, who saw the indescribable visions and heard the unutterable voices of the Heaven of Heavens, pronounces that *charity never faileth.*

But let us rest and rejoice in our present ignorance of the world to come. *It doth not yet appear what we shall be,* because on earth there is no adequate image of the love of the ever-living Father, in either its manner or its degree. *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

As much is known, perhaps, as could have been revealed, and certainly enough to convince us what is our duty and what our interest; to comfort us in the midst of earthly sorrows, and to inspire us with peace and joy in believing.

Having descanted on the glorious consequences of the Father's love, our Apostle says, *And every man that hath this hope in him purifyeth himself, even as he is pure.* A stronger motive to holiness cannot exist than the hope of heaven: for that is a place

prepared by the Father for the righteous only; although no one should distress himself under the consciousness of imperfection, for his very penitence is a proof that he is already in the arms of the Divine love.

Glorious, my brethren, is the destiny that awaits us! The first moment that we are conscious of our heavenly and immortal state will bring accessions of light and truth under which our earthly nature would faint. This thought, we are told by Dr. *Burnet*, relieved and gladdened the last hours of the martyred Lord *Russell*. *He spoke*, says the biographer,* *of his own situation; and said how great a change death made, and how wonderfully these new scenes would strike on the soul. He had heard how some that had been born blind were struck, when, by the couching of their cataracts, they saw;* BUT WHAT, *he said*, IF THE FIRST THING THEY SAW WERE THE SUN RISING?

Can we sufficiently study or prize the Gospel, which opens such scenes and raises such expectations? The promised inheritance is a combination of all that is interesting in novelty, all that is delightful in beauty and all that is elevating in magnificence. It is the union of the satisfactions of knowledge, the pleasures of pure love and the transports of joy. How great a being then is man! Who would despise life, or fear death, or grieve

* *Burnet's Journal in Lord John Russell's Life of John Lord Russell*, II. 101 and 274.

bitterly for those that are gone to their reward in their Father's house? Who would part with or neglect his religion, that by such promises makes life a blessing, and causes death to be no longer a curse?

Our highest interests (I speak to Christians, but let the men of the world hear!) are in that country whither we are travelling to spend nearly the whole of our existence. As our treasures are there, thither let our hearts ascend. Let us rise above the world that is perishing. For what is the world? It is not merely this material globe. There would be no beauty or grandeur here but for our associations of ideas, and these are all formed upon the model of human society. To *behold the face of man no more upon the earth*, is to take away from the earth all that is of value, or that can minister delight. Suppose this the last generation of the human race, and one of us to be the single survivor of all his species: would not this be the most unhappy of beings? Would not the world lose its wonted charms, and, instead of beauty, present deformity; instead of sublimity, dreariness and horror?—The world then is formed by human beings: but not by the generations gone by; for to the eye of sense what are they but dust and ashes? The present living inhabitants of the globe are the world; but they die daily, and presently will all have been gathered to their fathers. What therefore of certainty and satisfaction is there in the world? None, but as we carry ourselves forward to that state

where alone life and where alone society can be truly enjoyed; that state where hunger and thirst shall be no more known, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, where *God shall wipe away all tears from all eyes*, and where the unclouded light of the Divine love shall create the joy and call forth the praises of the multitude that no man can number, through ages that shall revolve their never-ending round.

Many of you, my Christian friends, there are, to whom the consolations of this discourse are particularly applicable—brothers that mourn the loss of brothers; sisters that weep over graves of sisters; wives that speak of husbands, and husbands of wives, as beings that once were; parents whose hearts have sunk into the tomb with children, and children that look around them in vain for parents, whose place once knew them, but shall know them no more in the House of Prayer or in the sanctuary of Home. Divine Providence speaks to you with a special voice in this unusual mortality; and allow me to say, as a humble instrument in the hands of Divine Providence, that I intend, with the blessing of God, to lay before you in the evening (when I am requested again to occupy this pulpit) some thoughts on the duty and necessity, the wisdom and the virtue of numbering our days.

At present our minds are naturally turned to one

of the most recent losses which this congregation has sustained, and one which the relation of the deceased to you all, through your beloved and venerated senior Pastor, has rendered more public than these mournful events commonly are. Her own excellent and admirable character, too, has made it impossible that survivors should not think and speak of her; and thank Heaven that they cannot speak or think of her without pleasing remembrance, or without gratitude to that Good Being that makes his children blessings one to another!

Funeral eulogiums are often vain, sometimes hurtful; and I understand that it is the judicious rule of your pastors to avoid them in this place, except where the interests of the living seem to demand that they should not be wholly silent upon the virtues of the dead. This exception to the rule may be permitted to a stranger upon the present occasion; though in the few words that I shall utter with regard to the deceased, I mean no panegyric, nor shall I attempt more than to repeat that which I have heard from many lips.

For most encouraging is it to me, who have been called to conduct this otherwise melancholy service, that our deceased sister has departed this life amidst the sincere regrets of all that knew her: hers is a virtuous Christian memory, and long will her name, embalmed in the hearts of her friends, be fragrant. This I have said is encouraging to me as a speaker; but of how little moment is that, compared with the

consolation which this delightful fact must bring to the wounded spirits of those that feel the bereavement of a near friend, a tender relation, a mother, a wife!

Trained by her family connexions* and education to Christian virtue, she was placed by Divine Providence in a relation of life in which the solid excellence of her understanding and her amiable disposition had the most favourable field for exercise.

By nature and by divine grace, she seems to have been one of those happy individuals that are formed to be trusted, esteemed and loved.

There was a calm sunshine habitually in her mind, which both kept up a glow of satisfaction in her own breast, and beamed kindness upon all around her. She had but one character, and was always the prudent, mild and amiable head of a family, the steady friend, the affectionate wife and the devoted mother.

Many present, I am assured, can bear witness that she took pleasure in doing good, and that she did good unostentatiously and without effort.

The female character is, under favourable circumstances, peculiarly apt and disposed for the amiable virtues recommended by the Christian religion; and our deceased sister made good her Christian profession by clothing herself with humility, and by putting on that meek and quiet spirit which in the sight of God is of great price.

Her religion lay not in words, but in deeds. She

* Mrs. Rowe was the only sister of the late Richard Hall Clarke, Esq., of Bridwell House, Devon.

lived as a Christian; and when she was called to die, she felt the secret power of her own character and was upheld by the promises of her Saviour. Depending not upon herself, but upon her Heavenly Father, whom she had learned to know through his well-beloved Son, she fell asleep, thankful for every kindness, commending her affectionate family to one another's love, resigned to the Divine will, and in the hope that is full of immortality. *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they do rest from their labours, and their works follow them.*

With these words and remembrances let all that mourn her loss be comforted. May they bear in mind that our virtuous and Christian friendships are for ever! May they that lament the separation from the best of mothers, reflect as Christians that the separation is but as a night of sleep between two days, the short and often cloudy and sometimes stormy day of earthly life, and the bright, never-ending day of heavenly immortality! And may my honoured friend, who, whilst his sorrows are shared by many, is in one sense alone in his bereavement, be enabled by the grace of God to take, in this trying affliction, the comfort which he has so frequently and effectually administered to others, and, though he yield some tears to nature, be strong in faith, giving glory to God!

To God Almighty, infinitely wise and merciful, I commend him and his and all of you, for time and for eternity. Amen.

SERMON II.

ON NUMBERING OUR DAYS.

Psalm xc. 12:

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

The reflection upon the short time of man upon earth is one of the most humbling that the mind can entertain, and yet the idea of Time itself is one of the loftiest speculations that can employ the understanding or engage the imagination. There is no theme besides that more interests the affections or suggests more important moral lessons. All that we are, all that our fathers have been, all that our posterity will be, is involved in the idea of Time. The flow of Time is the succession of human beings upon earth; the end of Time is the last terrestrial revolution, the destruction of the world.

In a light resembling this, the Psalmist views and represents the state of man's existence. The inscription at the head of the psalm, designates it as "a Prayer of Moses, the Man of God." Admitting the authority of this, and there is little reason to call it in question, it is probable that, as has been conjectured, it was composed by Moses upon the issuing of the Divine decree, that the whole generation of

the Israelites that came out of Egypt should perish in the wilderness, as a punishment for their sins. To such a crisis there are several expressions in it that apply with peculiar force. But whatever might be the occasion of the psalm and whoever was the author, it has been felt by a large proportion of the human race for ages, and under successive forms of religion, to be a true picture of the human mind in the state of contemplating the frailty and mortality of man's nature; and hence it has been usually recited in the solemn service by which the living mourn the dead and seek to rise above the gloom of death by means of prayer. It consists of acknowledgment and adoration of the Divine attribute of eternity; of confession of the justice of the everlasting Creator in subjecting man according to his pleasure to the laws of time, and in shortening the term of his earthly duration on account of his sins; of a poetical description, by similes from nature, of the shadowy and fugitive existence of the children of men; of supplications for wisdom and grace to learn the true state of the human being upon earth, and to profit by all the measures, and even by the judicial visitations of the Divine Providence; and, finally, of intercessions on behalf of the generation rising up and the generations to follow, that in them might be seen the beauty of holiness and the accomplishment of all the merciful and glorious designs of the Lord of all flesh with regard to the humbled but still favoured race of man. To the whole of it every heart con-

scious of pious feelings must assent; and no one that has sighed on beholding the falling leaf, or on hearing the striking of the clock that announces the departure of a year; no one especially that has stood beside the grave of a friend at that awful moment when the earth is about to receive her sacred charge, that moment which, in relation to the living and the dead, is the point that seems to divide Time from Eternity,—can refuse to make his own that single petition contained in the text, which is an epitome of the entire prayer, *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

Let us, I., make some *observations* upon the *number* of our days, and, II., enforce the *lessons of moral and practical wisdom* which the computation teaches.

We are, I., to make some *observations* on the *number* of our days.

The importance of numbering our days will not be doubted, but there are few persons that are fully aware of the difficulty of gaining a correct idea of time, because there are few that have seriously inquired into the subject, and employed the means for attaining the end in view.

The subject embraces the *Limits* of Time, and the *Progress* of Time.

1. The *Limits* of Time. These were fixed before the mountains were brought forth. God that made the world determined them with regard to both the species in general and every individual. All that

are registered in "the book of life" have the bounds of their habitation fore-appointed, and have a decree given them, defining their moments, beyond which they cannot pass. *Is there not an appointed time to man upon the earth? Are not his days also as the days of an hireling?*

That there is a law with regard to the number of man's days, is proved by the history of the species. The law is as yet unknown in respect of individuals, but is as clearly traced as any other natural law with relation to the mass of mankind. Order and proportion are seen in death, no less than in life. Experience has enabled men to form tables of life, tables rather of death, upon which the most sagacious as to worldly wisdom, the most cautious in the regulation of their affairs, and the most sceptical as to all moral laws, do not hesitate for a moment to place their dearest interests, and to found their provision for all whom they value upon earth. Thus, while individual deaths seem to our short sight to take place by accident, there is evidence little short of demonstration, that death reigns over the whole race by a superior and controuling law; which shews that every instance of mortality is also the result of a fore-appointed order, for otherwise there could be no sure calculation of the proportion of death to life. Were any thing like chance to find its way into the economy of life, the regularity of births and deaths would be immediately disturbed, and all computations upon them must soon be unavailing. The seeds of decline and extinction might be planted in

human nature itself, or the whole race might sicken and die together.

All the principles upon which men act in society are a secret but strong testimony to their belief and confidence in the Providence of God. Let them doubt as much as they please upon questions which are stated abstractly, they never betray any doubt when they are called to act; here, they go on in faith, shewing, perhaps in opposition to their words, that they have the firmest assurance of that Power, which cannot be unintelligent, that binds society together, that equalizes the sexes, and that suffers not death to usurp upon life, or to prevail beyond an exact arithmetical proportion.

The age of man is a definite period. Every one uses the expression, although some may be ignorant of the principle of Providence which it involves by just and necessary reasoning. When an individual is seen to live beyond what is called the age of man, he is regarded with wonder, and by many who would be surprised if they could reason far enough to perceive that their admiration of an example of longevity is in fact nothing else than homage to the stability of the wise and benevolent law by which the Supreme Being governs his creatures.

The testimony now of a long series of ages, proves that the rule of death has been nearly equal in all places, with the exception of cases of general calamity, which may fall under rules of another description with which we are unacquainted. The histo-

rian of his species in the present day could not describe the term of their existence more accurately than in the words of Moses in the psalm before us, written thousands of years ago: *The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*

In truth, so precisely are our days numbered by the Arbiter of life, that it would not be difficult to form a table of the lives of the persons constituting this congregation, which would not in any important particular be erroneous. The next year it might be shewn by the unfailing analogy of human life, that such a number of you will die; (yes, morally certain is it that the *next year* a certain number of *you* will *die;*) the year after such a number; the number increasing for the few following years; then decreasing, because only a few will be left to travel through old age to the tomb, until the time shall be come when not a single individual of those that now compose this assembly will remain upon the earth. Such a calculation set before the eye might accomplish that in which the preacher may perhaps fail, and draw from you all the prayer to God, no longer an unheeded text or a heartless form, *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

2. The *Progress* of Time. This is in some degree measured out to the senses by Divine Providence. The lights of heaven, the revolutions of the

earth, day and night, heat and cold, seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, are signs emblazoned on the face of nature of the flight of time, and of the velocity with which human life is passing away. But the seasons are silent in their march, and follow each other so gradually, that we scarcely observe their progress, except on days when the customs of society summon us to reflect that a certain period marked out on our books as a year has expired. We then call to mind the last season of the same kind, and are astonished as we reflect that while our life has seemed to us almost to stand still, we have been completing another of those large circles of days, of which a few only can remain to fill up our predestined sphere of being.

The artificial measurement of Time is commonly and justly adduced as a proof of the power of the human intellect. The degree to which this is carried is in truth the degree of the civilization and refinement of nations. By science and skill, Time is so divided and subdivided to both the eye and the ear, that we almost perceive the instant in which we now are. How much this contributes to the comfort of human life and the advantage of society, needs not be described. It may be more useful to remark how much it would contribute to intellectual improvement and moral and spiritual wisdom, if by such help men would so number their days as to learn the unspeakable value of every moment. Of a succession of instants Time consists, and when

machinery enables man to trace the rapid, never-ceasing flow of these, he may almost justly tremble before the work of his own hands. What indeed can strike more solemnly upon the mind in the dead of night, when the majority of human beings around are buried in insensibility, than the incessant audible motion of a time-piece! The stillness that prevails makes you susceptible of new sensations from the perpetually returning sound. You seem to hear the feet of Time—you feel that life is going fast away—you reflect that nothing can stop its rapid progress—you glance at the years gone by—you rush on to those that are to come—you are then recalled from your abstraction by the sound, ever repeated, that first awoke your thoughts—and you start as you again reflect that during the period in which your mind was absorbed in wonder at the flight of your moments, another series of them passed on unobserved, never to return!

To have no time, and not to be able to measure time, is nearly the same thing. What would be the inconceivable dreariness and horror of a state in which all the notices of time should cease, in which the works of art should stop their motion and sound, and the sun should disappear or stand still, may be partly gathered from the recorded feelings of such as have passed a winter in those regions where the light of day is lost for months, where the heavenly bodies are all obscured for days in succession, and where the intensity of the cold seems to clog the very wheels of

Time. Here is the nearest approach to an image of eternal sleep.

We measure time when we register our thoughts, feelings and actions; but every such register drops large intervals. You compare one date with another, and exclaim involuntarily, Is so much time gone for ever?

It is a sad truth, that the greater part of life gone by is lost to us. The first few years of existence are a total blank; of some of the following years of youth but a few traces remain. The days of maturity are commonly too unvaried to leave any memorial. In proportion as age comes on, the mind becomes insensible to the impression of passing events, and our memory dies before us.

You may try to assist memory by the help of written characters. You may inscribe the occurrences of every day in some well-arranged memorials of your days. What is the event? After some years your own history will appear strange to you: so much will be wholly forgotten that you will doubt whether you may trust to the traces of your own pen. You may be minute in your history, but your minuteness will defeat its own end. You cannot go over again what you have recorded; and your history may have grown to an incumbrance. We thus soon forget ourselves and lose our sameness; and, by our weakness and vanity, Providence admonishes us that we must undergo a signal change before we are capable of immortality, and that, with our present

uncertain and failing intellectual powers, great longevity would be no blessing, but an unspeakable infelicity.

Yet life, according to our measure of it, is a possession that exceeds all our estimates of value; and if you would reflect with alarm upon the conviction that a large portion of your earthly possessions was irrecoverably wasted, can you think without concern, except indeed as you are relieved by the hope of life to come, that a half—that more—that nearly all of your time, your existence, is gone beyond recall!

Men take an accurate account of time with regard to all but themselves. It is quickly seen and eagerly remarked that the bloom has left the cheek of one, that a second shews symptoms of decay, and that a third bends under the weight of years; but the keen observer perceives not his own progress: he may have gone on to the very point where human nature turns and declines, without reflecting that he is no longer young; nay, grey hairs may be here and there upon him, and he may know it not. Of all the proofs of human beings not numbering their days, none are so distressing or so mortifying to our common sense of the dignity of our nature, as those exhibited by persons in years; when in one sex they display a personal vanity and gaiety which is waging an evidently unequal and ridiculous war with Time, and when in the other they affect to pursue pleasures with failing, faltering senses, like spectres that are said to haunt the scenes of the vices of which in their

embodied state they were guilty, or strive to grasp riches with palsied, trembling fingers, or to place honours upon those brows where Death has already set his mark. Seeing these follies, the signs of that second childhood which is most to be deplored, the childhood of character, who can forbear praying with the man of God, *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom?*

II. We have already suggested some of the *lessons of moral and practical wisdom* which the numbering of our days teaches. But it may be of use to state them more particularly. And,

1. On any computation of his time upon earth, man feels a deep sense of *humility*. He sees in it his vanity and nothingness. His life, on which every thing that belongs to him and interests him depends, is swiftly passing, and no mortal hand can arrest or stay its progress. It is like the shadow of a cloud driven by the wind, which has indeed a place upon the earth, but is no sooner seen than it is gone.

What is the history of man but the scanty record of generations that have followed one another in swift succession through a momentary gleam of light into the land of darkness! Nations, ages, are but a name; even if that shadowy memorial of them remains. You survey with interest the page of their exploits; but you turn the leaf and find that you are entered upon another generation, perhaps upon another race. They are *carried away as with a flood; they are as*

a sleep; in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

Estimate the life of the individual and you will not feel less humbled. Of the shortest life how much is there on the review which is as if it had never been! The tale is told and forgotten. One third of your hours has been spent in the insensibility, the nothingness of sleep. There remain many days of consciousness; but subtract from these the days of vanity and folly, the days of wearisomness and discontent, and the dark days of affliction, and what a great deduction must be made from the sum of active life! State at the utmost amount the time allotted to what is termed the business of the world, and you will have to fill up the outline with unprofitable conversation, little pursuits, vain anxieties, and a round of actions, terminating in themselves. How small then the portion of existence that has been spent on that which is of the highest importance, the improvement of the mind and the attainment of the Christian character! The biography of an individual can indeed scarcely interest his fellow-creatures, unless it relate (and whether happily or unhappily, it does commonly relate) his feelings and conduct amidst dangers and sufferings, under bereavements and as a survivor.

Is it not matter of consciousness then that Pride was not made for man? Without adverting to that

sense of moral unworthiness which lays the soul in the dust before Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, does not the numeration of our days take away all pretence of boasting and enforce upon us the language of humility? *Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them. Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence and be no more.*

2. The computation of human life teaches, if any thing can teach, a lesson of *mutual toleration, compassion and kindness.* Nothing in our condition is certain but our short continuance upon earth. What time then have we to spare for fastidiousness, peevishness, alienation of heart, anger and resentment? Imagine a company of human beings thrown upon a neck of land surrounded by waters from which there is no escape, upon whom the flood is constantly advancing, and whose number is thinned by every wave; would you not deem it preposterous and shocking that they should waste their uncertain moments in

contention and mutual annoyance? Scarcely less absurd in the eye of reason are our animosities, jealousies, censures and disputes, who cannot assure ourselves of to-morrow's sun. If not from love, yet from pity, let us shew kindness to one another, as creatures of a day. All our charity may but just render life supportable to some of our fellow-travellers in our short earthly pilgrimage. Let no one then put a stumbling-block in his brother's way, but let him rather seek to sustain the feeble knees and to lift up the hands which hang down, to lighten the heavy heart and heal the wounded spirit. Above all, Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.

3. The numbering of our days shews, in spite of all our complaints, the *equity of the Divine Providence* in the allotment of our time; for it teaches us that with our present constitution of mind and body we cannot bear long-continued life. After brief intervals of thought and exertion, we require to be placed for safety in a state of inaction and insensibility. Wakefulness for any considerable period would bring on distraction of mind, from which death would be a relief. The cares and pursuits and studies of our few days, thus lightened by the intervention of sleep, would still be a burden that we could not bear, if one thought or occupation did not supplant another, and our attention were not relaxed and our affections diverted by a change in our objects and desires. And with all this merciful provision for our weakness, the unavoidable action of

life wears out in the course of nature the mental powers, so that few persons live to a great age that do not outlive themselves. Idle and ungrateful therefore are our murmurs at the shortness of our time. We have enough of it for every good purpose; as much as our strength would enable us to use, though none to waste or squander. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?"—Every class of men perceive the folly of repining at the want of Time in all other classes. The man of business despises the man of pleasure for squandering his time; the man of pleasure pities or laughs at the man of business for the same thing; both smile at the student, and he in return wonders at them; and yet perhaps all concur superciliously and absurdly, not to say irreligiously, to find fault with the Supreme Being for having given them so little time.* In truth, all lament that they have not more time; and yet all in some mode or degree abuse the time that they have, and few so number their days as to apply their hearts to wisdom.

4. The just estimate of human life shews that *Time belongs only to the virtuous.* Time is the conscious succession of ideas, and therefore they will, strictly speaking, have most of it who have the most and highest and best thoughts. All vice and wickedness will be found to limit and chain down the mind to some single idea, in which life is swallowed up. Hence, remorse is nothing more than the painful

* Lord Bolingbroke has somewhere made this or a similar remark.

recollection of the past, bringing on an incapacity of enjoyment of the present and of hope for the future. It is the high privilege of innocence and integrity to be at home and happy in all periods, to take the benefit of that which now is, to live over again with satisfaction that which is gone by, and to welcome that which is to come.

5. The numbering of our days ceases to be a melancholy duty, when we learn, as we may learn from the numeration, the *Christian doctrine of immortality. Time was!* is indeed a mournful incription upon the heart of man; why mournful, however, but because man is so formed as to pant of necessity for an existence infinitely beyond the present measure of his days? And if the hope of life to come, and life for ever, be a natural sentiment, it cannot be disappointed under the government of that all-perfect Intelligence which has created nothing in vain, which has displayed infinite wisdom in the creation and support of human life, and which, as we have seen, is not less apparent or less glorious in the regulation and controul of death itself. The mind of man is unspeakably above his condition as a child of dust; and the Father of spirits has sent his well-beloved Son (welcome, honoured messenger of paternal love!) to assure his brethren that as he was once like them mortal, so they shall be like him immortal, and joint inheritors of that inconceivably happy state where Time and Death have no power.

6thly and lastly. Our condition as short-lived creatures, and our expectations as Christians, equally admonish us of our duty to *redeem the time* and to prepare for eternity by patient continuance in well-doing. If our days upon earth be few and short, and if an eternal state of retribution will succeed, what folly, what infatuation can be greater than the habitual neglect of the concerns of the soul! Preparation for the world to come does not imply contempt of the present life, but the contrary; for he who consults his own true happiness promotes also that of his fellow-creatures, and at the same time and by the same means serves God: in other words, he who, listening to the voice of religion, is taught so to number his days as to apply his heart unto wisdom, possesses the only qualification for the enjoyment of that eternal day which cannot be divided or numbered by parts and which will not pass away.

Hasten then, in this short moment of time, to supply what is wanting and to correct what is wrong in the frame of your minds. Have you taken a false step? Hesitate not to change your course. Have you loitered in your heavenly pilgrimage? Arouse yourself and run with diligence the race that is set before you. Is it with you the evening of life? Review coolly the proceedings of the past day; and be quick and resolute to repair neglects and to repent of transgressions and to amend your ways, since there is no more time to be lost and the last follies are always the worst. Make provision for being

gathered to your fathers in peace, and for securing the blessing of them that come after you. *Whatsoever* of good, of just, of generous, *thy hand findeth to do. do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.*

The sum of all is, that true life is not to be estimated by the revolutions of the sun and moon, but by the mind and conscience. *For honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years. But wisdom is the grey hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age.* He who is allowed to fill up but a small circle of days, but whose time has been occupied with the thoughts, feelings and habits that become a Christian, may welcome his last hour, though to the apprehension of nature it come prematurely, and say, "I finish my course in content: I could have enjoyed and used more of life, but I have had enough to excite my gratitude to God and to awaken my hopes of his future goodness. In his arms I sleep: his will be done: let him be glorified both by my life and my death. He that has made my portion happy in Time, will not fail to crown Eternity with his blessing."

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